

Interview Summary

Capsizing of the Water Taxi LADY D in Baltimore Harbor, Maryland On March 6, 2004 DCA04MM015

Witness: Master Chief Petty Officer Melvin L. Johnson, USNR
Naval Reserve Center, Baltimore, Maryland

Date: March 17, 2004

Location: Telephone Interview

Persons present: W. R. Mr. Woody, NTSB
Mariette Burer, NTSB

Mr. Woody – Master Chief I have a question I am not sure I asked. It concerns your eyewitness statement about seeing the boat coming from left to right.

Master Chief Johnson – Exactly

Mr. Woody – If I recall correctly the vessel was approaching the red and green buoy?

Master Chief Johnson – Right

Mr. Woody – And which side of the buoy did it go on. Did it go between the buoy and you...?

Master Chief Johnson – No. It went between the buoy and the green vessel that was over there by the discharge facility.

Mr. Woody – Ok thank you. That was the thing that I wanted to clarify.

Master Chief Johnson – It was further over, it was closer to the other side than it was to us.

Mr. Woody – As it moved from left to right, when you first saw it, what part of the green ship was it adjacent to, close to, or passing by?

Master Chief Johnson – Would you repeat that?

Mr. Woody –Yes. When you first saw the water taxi.

Master Chief Johnson – Water taxi?

Mr. Woody –Yes. Was it at the middle of the green vessel, toward the left end of the green vessel or....

Master Chief Johnson – OK Since the buoy was in line with the bow area near the anchor as he passed between.. I am looking out the window right now, at a straight line. I am looking at the red buoy and where the anchor would have been on the bow of the green vessel. He had passed the bow of the ship and the ship was basically sticking out a little bit to the right of the red buoy. As he passed the bow, that is when he went to make the turn.

Mr. Woody – Let me clarify something in my mind. You say he made a turn and then capsized. Where was he in relation to the bow of the ship at that time?

Master Chief Johnson – He had passed the bow and as he passed the bow that is when he was negotiating his turn to port. And then as he did, it looked like as he turned he went maybe a couple of yards and that is when I noticed the left side of the water taxi come out of the water almost to a 45-degree angle. And then before it could come back down it seemed like it caught momentum and kept going to its starboard side and flipped over.

Mr. Woody – And before that did you see it heel to one side or the other before that?

Master Chief Johnson – No.

Mr. Woody –Were you watching it the whole time?

Master Chief Johnson – Yes.

Mr. Woody -- And was Senior Chief Scardina in the area watching it as well?

Master Chief Johnson – Yes. We were standing right next to each other.

Mr. Woody – Thank you very much.